



**Purim** is presented in several written documents in the tradition. The first is Megillat Esther -- the scroll of Esther – Esther’s written account of events in Shushon, Persia. The second is an entire tractate of Talmud Megillah. In Gemorah Megilla, there is an argument about whether to include the Scroll of Esther in the Tanach. This argument extends to what should be included in the written Torah in general. We know there were extensive arguments over Kohelet and Song of Songs, and the Book of Maccabees, as well as the Scroll of Esther. These arguments extended throughout Jewish history until today to such documents as the Mishnah, the Gemorah, and the Shulchan Aruch. The Men of the Great Assembly decided to include the Scroll of Esther and exclude the Book of Maccabees. **Channukah** remains an entirely **oral** holiday. There are only about 100 words concerning **Channukah** in one chapter of Gemorah Shabbos.

What are the issues? Our rabbis thought that **writing** down a book is dangerous. The battle with Hellenism was the biggest battle in all of Jewish history. Hellenism was very attractive to Jews because of its intellectual—**chochma**--emphasis. The rabbis felt a necessity to sharply differentiate Judaism from Hellenism because of this great attraction. In Hellenism, knowledge did not have character implications. One could study a topic like psychology and know it very well, yet not know how to apply it at all. In other words, one could write an extensive book about riding a bicycle without knowing how to ride a bike. This gap is the gap between the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life. The rabbis felt that a holy word connects with a person’s soul and transforms a person entirely. This is the essence of **Torah** learning, which is called the Tree of Life. The Greeks were preoccupied with the secular words of chol. They were repeating the mistake of Adam and Eve at the Tree of Knowledge, that if they could write a book on it, they would know as much as Hashem himself. Hellenists became famous from the books they **wrote**. Torah Jews sought an antidote to this egotism by taking the name of the book they **wrote**. For example, Rabbi Kalonymus Shapira changes his name to Aish Kodesh, which is the name of the book he **wrote**.

At **Purim**, we celebrate by getting so that we can’t tell the difference between “blessed is Mordecai and cursed is Haman.” We drink until we don’t know. This is called tikkun eitz hadaat—a repair of the Tree of Knowledge. We also feast and give charity to celebrate **Purim**. On **Channukah**, we light candles because “Hashem’s candles are the souls of humans.” **Channukah** is an emphasis on the **oral Torah**. It focuses on **bina**, which is a right brain function, as opposed to **chochma**, which is a left brain function. **Channukah** de-emphasizes the

intellect in its battle against the Hellenized Jews. Only when we synthesize the concreteness of Purim, which is the **written Torah**, and **Channukah**, which is the oral Torah, can we get to the **Torah** of intimacy--**daat**. To this day, most of us have attended Hellenistic institutions of higher learning whose motto is “publish or perish.” This conversation between **Channukah** and **Purim** reminds us of the crucial differences between the **Torah** of intimacy—**daat**, and the Bible taught in the rational—chochma--institutions of higher learning.